

**CLAIMS**

1. A method for the treatment of a surface comprising the sequential application to the surface of a hydrogel-precursor component and a crosslinking component in either order to form a removable hydrogel patch on said surface, and the removal of the patch once the removable hydrogel patch has formed or substantially formed thereon.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the surface is a soft surface.
3. A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein the soft surface is selected from the list consisting of textiles, clothing, carpets, curtains, and upholstery.
4. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the surface is a hard surface.
5. A method as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the removal is achieved by peeling said patch from the surface.
6. A method as claimed in any of claims 1 to 3 wherein the removal is via a washing process.
7. A method according to any preceding claim wherein the crosslinking component is applied to the surface prior to the application of the hydrogel-precursor component.
8. A method according to claim 7 wherein a second application of the crosslinking component is made after the application of the hydrogel-precursor component.

9. A method as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the crosslinking component comprises  $M^{2+}$  ions, where M is  
5 a Group IIA element or any other metallic element capable of exhibiting a +2 oxidation state, and the hydrogel-precursor component comprises an alginate.
10. A method as claimed in claim 9 wherein the  $M^{2+}$  ions  
10 are  $Ca^{2+}$  ions.
11. A method as claimed in claim 9 or 10 wherein the alginate is a sodium alginate.
12. A method as claimed in any of claims 1 to 11  
15 wherein said hydrogel-precursor is present in the range 0.25 to 5 wt% of the weight of the component containing said hydrogel-precursor.
13. A method according to any one of claims 9 to 12  
20 wherein the  $M^{2+}$  ions are present as 0.03 to 5% by weight of the crosslinking component.
14. A method as claimed in any preceding claim wherein  
25 at least one of the crosslinking or hydrogel-precursor components further comprises one or more of the following: a bleach, an enzyme and a surfactant.
15. Use of a removable patch comprising crosslinking  
30 and hydrogel precursor components as defined in any of claims 1 to 14, in the removal of a stain from a surface, wherein said patch is formed by the sequential application of the components to the surface.

16. A kit comprising a hydrogel-precursor-containing component, and a crosslinking component, both as defined  
5 in any of claims 1 to 14.

17. Use of a kit comprising a hydrogel-precursor-containing component, and crosslinking component, as defined in any of claims 1 to 14, in the treatment of a  
10 surface by the sequential application of the components to the surface.

18. An applicator means comprising a plurality of separate compartments and wherein each compartment  
15 contains at least either a hydrogel-precursor component, or a crosslinking component, both as defined in any of claims 1 to 14, such that said components are kept apart as and until the components are sequentially applied to a surface to form a removable hydrogel patch.

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